

Jessie's Well Journal (revised) – 4 April 2005

Day two – 22 March 2005	First entry – approx 8.00 am	I have been thinking about this all night!
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Stephen – if I wrote the journal with headings such as this I would think that I would not place any thing similar into the main body of the thesis. I will write the rest as if it is going into that “main body” – I would use headings too, I just haven't worked out where yet.

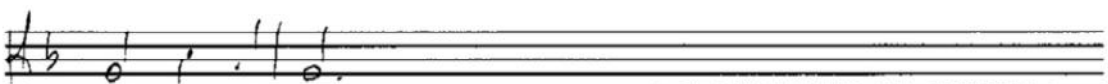
I have been thinking about this process all night and now that I have sat down to score and journal again I am lead to consider the process of composition from the beginning more fully. If not I have then considered only the final part, the scoring of the work onto manuscript – what of the fullness of creativity in the musing and dallying over thoughts and things?

As I peruse the sketch (in this I mean the complete work in sketch not the jottings done to note down the melody) I am reminded of when it began its journey into being. I was adjudicating at the Australian Academy Festival of Music (High School C grade bands, if I remember correctly. It was October 23rd. A contest heat in the afternoon and the final of the whole section in the late afternoon, early evening) and the melody began to overwhelm me. I barely recollect that I had a sense of wanting to write before I went to adjudicate but time took over and I set out for the festival.

I am not usually one to sketch ideas to come to a final draft; I usually write the final draft and make little alteration. Given the nature of the environment I found myself in (High School C grade bands) I found that I could not get the melodic idea down the first time as I wanted. The sketch displays evidence of a number of workings through. In fact, there are two attempts at a melody (ex. 1 and 2) and then the final melody (ex. 3), as I wanted it, with no alterations.

Ex. 1

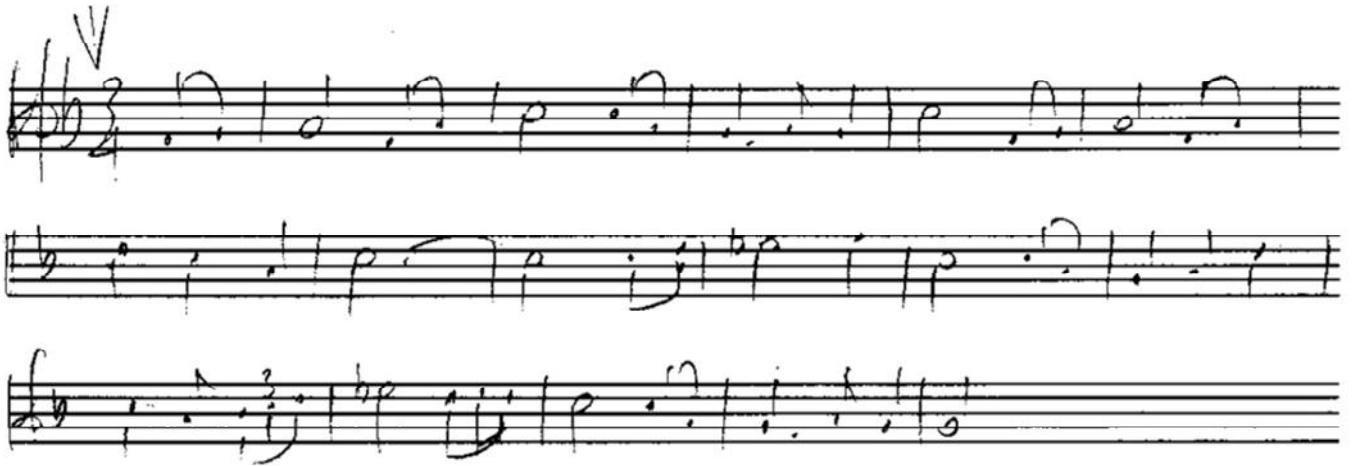
Jessie's Well



Ex. 2



Ex. 3



Then there are three versions of the melody. Two with harmony – see ex. 4 and 5:

Ex. 4

Jesse's Well Harmony 1

Handwritten musical notation for Ex. 4, titled "Jesse's Well" and "Harmony 1". It consists of four staves. The top staff is the melody in treble clef, 3/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. The second and third staves provide accompaniment. The bottom staff shows a few notes, possibly a continuation or a specific harmonic detail. The notation is dense with many notes and rests.

Ex. 5

Jessie's Well Harmony 2.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for 'Jessie's Well' in G major (one flat). It consists of four systems, each with two staves. The top staff of each system is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals, representing a harmonic arrangement of the melody.

The third with counter melody is actually two presentations of the melody with a variant of counter melody each time. Ex. 6

Jessie's Well Counter melodies?

The image shows a handwritten musical score for 'Jessie's Well' in G major (one flat). It consists of two systems, each with two staves. The top staff of each system is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals, illustrating two different counter-melody variants for the main melody.

Ex. 6 (cont.)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for two pieces. The first piece, 'BOLGA MAMIKETOU', is written on four staves. The first two staves are in treble clef, and the last two are in bass clef. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings. The second piece, 'GATHE BIRDA', is also written on four staves, with the first two in treble clef and the last two in bass clef. The notation is similar to the first piece, featuring complex rhythmic patterns and melodic lines. The handwriting is clear and legible.

As can be seen in example 4 and 5, the harmonised versions display scant evidence of 'working out' and though the counter melodic version is similar I have used only small portions of it in the final piece where as the fullness of both of the harmonised versions is quoted in their entirety.

I sense that what is at work here is not my "normal" process and the alien action of writing sketches and 'working out' came about because of the situation I found myself in as it had not allowed me to 'hear' it internally. It seems I have endeavoured to write it down before I lost it and thus have committed more to paper than I normally would at that stage of the compositional process.

Yet, having done that and having produced the basic material for what has become the song form of the work, I am aware that the process from then on is as I have usually done. I have mused and mulled over the ideas and fiddle with the harmony at the margins and then I sat down and wrote the work in two or three short sittings.

What then of craft in this activity?

I know that it underpins the thoughts and I know that I have conceived this work so it can be played by high school students; so the construction of lines, harmony, and even motific and structural considerations are such that the music is not only approachable by the players and conductor but approachable at a level that allows them to engage with it musically and not just technically. Too often I have heard high school groups who are scrabbling to execute the notes and thus execute the music! I cannot allow that to happen to this.

But, this is not a conscious phenomenon. It happens and I can record it after the event. Consider for a moment the song like nature of the first harmonisation (ex. 8).

Ex. 8

Jesse's Cell Harmony 1

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "Jesse's Cell". The score is divided into two main sections: "Jesse's Cell" and "Harmony 1". It consists of four systems of staves. The first system has two staves, the second and third systems have three staves each, and the fourth system has two staves. The notation is handwritten and includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "p" and "f". The overall style is that of a personal sketch or a working draft.

The lines are 'singable' the harmonies similarly so. On reflection here I may well have written the bass a little less wide in tessitura but I am aware that what I am hearing in my mind's ear here is breadth of ensemble sound and not a close vocal scoring or a need to accommodate an immature bass voice. This would be approachable by a school or community choir without much

effort. It then makes for similar acquittal by a school or community based ensemble, when thoughtfully scored.

Why would I worry about the acquittal and the performance? I want the music played but I also want to ensure that is “wanted” to be played. It must sound good and it must be enjoyable to play. Stretching the capacities of the amateur musician will lead to instant disinterest. Though the professional player may not like a work they will play it because it is their job. The amateur will just discard the music that does not engage them or exceeds the parameters of their performing abilities.

A consideration of the full score will highlight the areas of orchestration that take into account the performance parameters of the amateur and school based musician. Example x, y and z display.....

Where did *Jessie's Well* come from?

Here is the autobiography that again defines a work of mine!

Russell Bauer was the band teacher at Kingaroy State High School and a very capable and efficient teacher he was. He has now moved on to another school in Toowoomba. Russell, for some reason known only to him, thought I did not like him and that I actively worked against him and his success. This angered me no end! Much to my amazement, when I became a Christian my anger turned to sadness. What had I done that would turn a fine young musician so viciously against me? I was moved to deal with this problem but had no understanding of how I might do so. I was deeply distressed by this.

Circumstances were that I had the chance to adjudicate his group (something that had caused him angst in the past – little did I realise that) in May of 2004. At the conclusion of the performance, which was first class, we chatted and I broached the subject of the apparent division between us. We talked haltingly that night about matters around and about that problem.

I visited his school twice after that. In June I conducted a workshop with his fine band. Russell spent the whole time I worked with them taking notes. He said he had learned a great deal as he watched me work with his students. We shared dinner in a restaurant during that visit and he invited me to his home for dinner with his family when I returned in July. It was a wonderful night of openness, frank discussion and much joy and some tears. His second child, Jessie, made me a place mat for my position at the table. It said how it was good that I was there with them and especially with her Daddy. It was an honest child's comment on what had been a sad adult's dilemma.

We spoke of me writing something for his group that first night. We spoke more the second time we met, when I worked with his ensemble and I decided that I would write something about places on the journey from Brisbane to Kingaroy, his town. One such place is off the road, a little after Blackbutt – Jessie's Well. The title created itself that day as I drove past and

thought of a pure child's simple and gentle summation of what is now a lasting friendship and a blessing to both families.

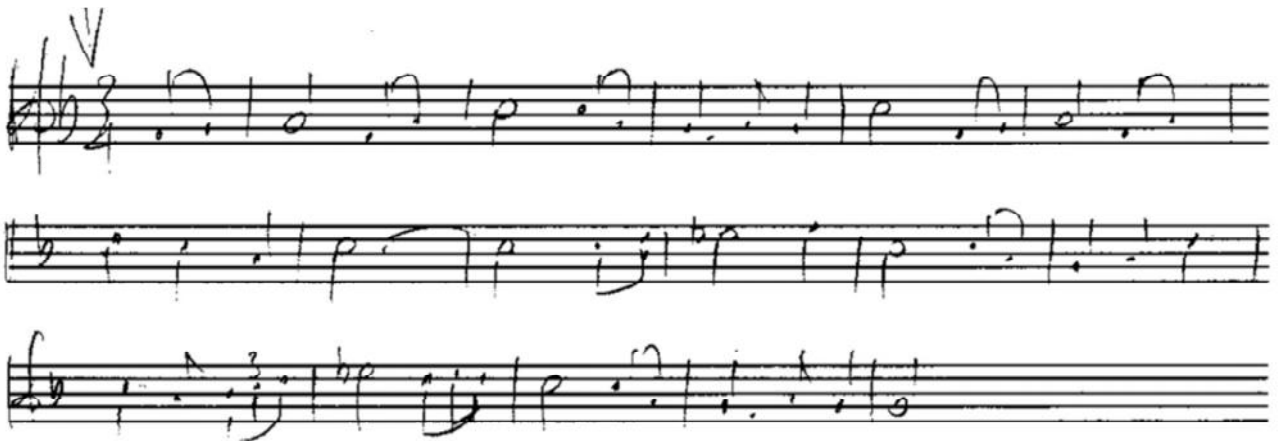
Enough of this tear jerking tale! But, it will be interesting to see if the music represents the story in any major way – in any way actually.

Back to the score!

I have told of the works genesis but how is craft emergent in that tale?

Simplicity is represented in the melody, without a doubt! This is Jessie, the teller of joy and answered prayer? Investigate the melody again with me here (ex. 9):

Ex. 9



The music is lyrical and singable, so it is approachable. My wife sings and plays it now and is taken by it. Consider its lack of tonal and rhythmic complexity, its gentle shape and line and its consistent phrase length. See that the stretch to the second octave is once only and is positioned in the middle and it gives the line a simple arch and a simple folk like quality. (Stephen, do I need to go any further? I feel like I would be telling my grandfather how to suck eggs if I did.)

Harmony may well be evidence of a number of things. The simple harmony of the complete first version (ex. 8) is mostly diatonic with non-offensive and approachable chromaticism that is related to the modality present in the melody. It is to be found two thirds of the way through the complete work, at bar 60 (ex. 10)

Ex. 10

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Ex. 10, consisting of three systems of staves. The top system includes a vocal line with the instruction "with bearing and conviction" and a brass line marked "Brass". The middle system contains a woodwind line with the instruction "Alto Saxophone, Clarinet". The bottom system features a piano line. The score is filled with musical notation, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. There are several circled numbers, including a circled '68' in the bottom system. The handwriting is somewhat messy, with some ink bleed-through and overlapping lines.

Note that what can be seen in example 8 is replicated here almost exactly. The orchestration of lines mitigates some of the voice leading problems across instrumental groups, as can be seen in example x, y and z.....

The second version (ex. 11) is more divergent in nature and might well be representative of something else in the narrative but I think it is just lushness I was after. "What was the composer striving to produce here" I can hear the teacher asking. The answer might be fraught with conjecture and supposition when what he was trying to produce was a lovely sound!

Ex. 11

Handing along here

cresc

Block

193

194

Brass crescendo

You can see two things here; one is the inclusion of counter melodic ideas filling out the score to an extent and the second thing is the insertion of a 'fifth' part between the tenor and the bass. Such an addition to the harmonisation here can add depth and richness to the sound but only if well scored.

It can also be seen that the sketch has been "written" a number of times. Not only is the second harmonisation in evidence but the counter melodic ideas have been inserted and the working through is evidenced by the variation of shading in the pencil notes.

Architecture and other components might be dealt with as I journey through the scoring process. Let's see!

This next section would be the full score and I will endeavour to produce something similar there